

Remarks by President Donald Tusk after his meeting with President Hashim Thaçi in Pristina

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Good afternoon. I am pleased to be in Pristina today and let me start by thanking President Thaçi for his hospitality and for the good meeting we just had.

My visit today is a part of a round trip in the region to prepare for our EU-Western Balkans Summit in Sofia on 17th May. During the summit, the EU should first and foremost reaffirm its unequivocal support for the European perspective of the region. Just like I expect, the EU will welcome the Western Balkan partners' strategic choice and shared commitment to European principles, values and unity. The European Union is and will continue to be the most reliable partner for the entire region.

This is also why our summit, in concrete terms, should improve connections with and within the region – in the area of transport, energy or digital. As well as human exchanges such as Erasmus+.

Likewise, we will also use the summit to discuss how to tackle some of our common security challenges, such as migrant smuggling, terrorism and organised crime.

Now let me turn to Kosovo more specifically. I want to congratulate you on the recent ratification of the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro. It put Kosovo one step closer to visa free travel to European Union. It was also proof that cross-party cooperation is possible on issues of vital interest to all Kosovars. I know for a fact that you will not give up but continue the reform process, fully respecting your international commitments. In the best interest of your country. Fighting organised crime and corruption to be effective, also needs political consensus in Kosovo.

We also discussed the state of the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. Without a comprehensive normalisation of relations with Serbia and full implementation of the agreements. I do not see how a breakthrough in relations with the EU could be achieved. I know it's going to be hard but I am still a cautious optimist.

Let me use this opportunity to thank President Thaçi, just as I thanked

President Vučić yesterday, for the personal capital he has invested in the dialogue. I know this is a difficult and emotionally charged issue for both sides. But there is no viable alternative to normalisation. In fact, it comes down to a strategic choice that I am 100% convinced will pay off in the long run. Thank you.

(Check against delivery)

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